

# ART LIES

A Contemporary Art Quarterly No. 63 | Fall 2009 US \$7 CAN \$8



L. (l to r) Rupert Deese, *Merced and Tuolumne Rivers/2*, 2004; oil on plywood and fiberglass; 51 x 51 inches; Jay Shinn, *Four-X 01.052009*, 2009; stainless steel and latex paint; 64 x 64 x 8 inches

R. Jay Shinn, *Bi-Slanted 01.052009*, 2009; stainless steel, latex paint; 8 x 32 x 60 inches; courtesy Marty Walker Gallery, Dallas; photo by Kimberly Berba

## DALLAS

### Jay Shinn and Rupert Deese Marty Walker Gallery

At the height of optimistic idealism in the early twentieth century, modernists blurred the boundaries between media such as painting and sculpture—and between reality and abstraction—to produce pictures of possibility. For some, including the Russian artists Kasimir Malevich and El Lissitzky, abstraction was a vehicle for revolution. Platonic form and Cartesian coordinate systems synthesized mathematics and philosophy to underscore basic universal truths, and modernist artists sought to reveal these primordial relationships through orchestrations of line, shape and color. If aesthetic boundaries could be crossed, some expounded, then maybe social structures such as class, religion or nationality could also be permeable. Thus, the traditionally disenfranchised could move beyond their place in the lower echelons of society.

While many artists and theorists have debunked the political ambitions and metaphysical pretensions of these idealists, there has always remained a core group of believers who have weathered the naysayers. Jay Shinn and Rupert Deese are two artists whose work grows directly out of a purist tradition, and their joint exhibition at Marty Walker, *Spatial Shifts*, is a testament to their fealty.

Jay Shinn constructs stainless steel prisms that cast an array of shadows onto walls painted a faint warm gray. On closer inspection, it becomes apparent that some of these shadows are painted too. Combining this trompe l'oeil with the matter-of-fact presentation of both the real shadows and the form of the sculpture itself, Shinn creates a multilayered experience from each of these seemingly simple objects.

Rupert Deese makes objects that sit somewhere between monochromatic painting and relief sculpture. Inspired by plate tectonics and the mountainous watershed areas surrounding the Kern River in the Sierra

Nevadas, Deese assembles small plywood shapes to create a surface that ripples across each form. Parallelograms in green and orange hang on the wall with a kind of iconic austerity, but over time, as daylight moves across the picture plane, the odd sensation of a slight, attenuated movement becomes visible.

One might think that Shinn and Deese's sculpture are Minimalist works like those of Donald Judd or early Frank Stella. And while relationships to those works exist, Shinn and Deese's objects are more akin to works by Ellsworth Kelly or Agnes Martin—two artists interested in referencing oblique abstractions found in the world rather than a purely reductive notion of material and form. Shinn's use of both real and painted shadow as visual elements in collaboration with physical matter shows an investment in perception and phenomenological experience. Shadows record light passing across a form, in relation to the real experience to which drawn marks also allude. Deese's reference to the natural forms of a particular landscape also uses geometry to allude to something outside the work of art. This use of abstraction as metaphor stands in stark contrast to Judd's interest in specific objects that erased both illusion and allusion to anything other than themselves.

In an era past the purities of Malevich and Judd, Shinn and Deese explore the possibilities of form in ways that allow for a conversation between each other's work, the relationships between abstract form and visual experience and the haunting specter of history that hovers over this exhibition.

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